"NOAA COOPERATIVE SCIENCE CENTERS: WINNING THE FUTURE"
Education Partnership Program's Cooperative Science Center Announcement
Washington, DC
Tuesday, November 15, 2011
As delivered

Thank you, Louisa [Koch].

Good morning everyone.

Before I begin my formal remarks, I'd like to take a moment to recognize Senator Mikulski, Representative Fattah, and Representative Serrano. Thank you for your commitment and leadership in advancing the teaching and learning of science, technology, engineering, and mathematics – the STEM disciplines. Without the support of these Members, we would not be here today in recognition of the awards to these fine institutions of higher learning – our partners.

Today, with Senator Mikulsi and Representatives Fattah and Serrano, we announce NOAA's Educational Partnership Program awards for four Cooperative Science Centers at Minority-Serving Institutions. Through these grants, we not only fund centers at the City College of NY, Florida A&M University, Howard University, and the University of Maryland at Eastern Shore, but through them we also fund many of their university partners all over the country – in California, Virginia, Delaware, New York, Mississippi, Texas, Florida, Georgia, Nebraska, and Oregon – as well as Puerto Rico - all with a goal of increasing the number of students, particularly from underrepresented communities, who are trained in STEM disciplines that directly support NOAA's mission.

Championing STEM education says that America is serious about preparing our young people for good, high paying jobs – jobs that will help them succeed, jobs that will help their families and communities prosper, and jobs that give American businesses the talent they need to compete.

Clearly, STEM education brings multiple dividends, including financial benefits:

- The growth of STEM jobs was three times greater than that of non-STEM jobs over the last 10 years, and STEM jobs are expected to continue to grow at a faster rate than other jobs in the next 10 years.
- STEM workers earn 26 percent more than their non-STEM counterparts.

Equally important, these jobs can help restore America's competitiveness in the global economy.

At NOAA, we think there is no better way to put STEM to work for America than to deliver and revolutionize the critical environmental intelligence we need to protect lives and property from blizzards, hurricanes, tornadoes, drought, heat waves, wildfires, and other extreme weather events. At NOAA, we put STEM to work for America when we conduct

the science with which we build the tools that communities and resource managers use to maintain healthy oceans, sustainable fisheries, and safe marine highways. At NOAA, STEM works for America when we explore the ocean to better define our nation's boundaries and valuable underwater resources. The programs we are recognizing today train young people to build solutions for a better tomorrow.

For America to be competitive in the global marketplace, we need bright, creative minds. Bright minds come from everywhere – from rural America, our suburbs, and our cities. Bright minds come from all walks of life and from the wonderfully diverse backgrounds that make America great. Bright minds can grow anywhere. Our job is to see that we give as many young people as many opportunities to learn, stretch in new directions, develop critical thinking, creativity and scientific expertise – in short, we must grow their diverse potential into an intellectual capital that will help families, communities, American business, and ultimately America's competitiveness.

In these tough economic times as the nation works to spend within our means, it is responsible to ask "Is there evidence that these programs work?" We asked just that… and the answer was an unequivocal, "YES!"

We scrutinized the track record of NOAA's Educational Partnership Program Cooperative Science Centers since its beginning in 2001 and found clear evidence of success. For example:

- Since 2001, this program trained 1,863 students.
- More than 956 of them earned degrees in STEM fields relevant to NOAA's mission.
- Three-quarters of those earning degrees in this program are from underrepresented communities.
- Today, while we celebrate the success of this program, 686 additional students are pursuing their degrees as part of the Cooperative Science Centers.
- And…of keen interest to me, thanks to this program, NOAA now has 100 employees who have come through these programs.

I am delighted with these numbers. Clearly this program is succeeding.

I was astounded to learn that 100 percent of the doctoral degrees in atmospheric science earned by underrepresented students during 2006-07 were supported by NOAA's Educational Partnership Program. The same is true for Ph.D.s granted with a formal title of environmental science.

This is a small program with a huge impact.

We urgently need this program and more like it to achieve the President's goal to out-innovate, out-educate, and out-build the rest of the world.

I am deeply grateful to Senator Mikulski, Representative Fattah, and Representative Serrano for opening doors for bright young minds, and, in so doing, helping America succeed.

Thanks to you, they will have better paying STEM-related jobs – jobs that will help them, their families, communities, and American businesses succeed. Thank you, too, for making NOAA stronger through the contributions of these STEM students. At NOAA, our STEM jobs save lives and property and make oceans healthy and safe for everyone.

Our collective challenge is to invest in the minds of the future despite difficult economic and political times.